

Parks Commission
Tuesday November 19, 2019 / 6PM
Meeting Location: Montpelier Police Station Conference Room

Meeting Agenda

6:00 November 19 agenda
November 12 minutes

6:05 Public Comment

6:10 North Branch Trail Construction (staff w/ MAMBA)

Background: Spring 2018, the Parks Commission approved a proposal from MAMBA to build new multi-use trails in North Branch Park. Construction began summer 2018, continued fall 2019, with plans to be completed spring 2020. The trails are quickly becoming popular with mountain bikers, though some portions of trail construction will pose challenges for use by hikers and XC skiers.

- Update on current status/progress of 2019 trail construction (5 mins)
- Review and discuss staff/MAMBA proposal for mitigating construction challenges to ensure multiuse intent, addressing walkability, XC ski access, etc. (15 mins)
- Review and discuss MAMBA's plan for 2020 trail construction, including location, timing, and design (10 mins)

6:40 Expanded winter fat tire biking in Hubbard and North Branch Parks (Kip Roberts, MAMBA)

Background: The Parks Commission temporarily approved winter fat tire biking on select Hubbard and North Branch trails winter 2018-2019. MAMBA will present a proposal requesting that the Commission permanently allow winter fat tire biking. (See two attachments for more information: proposal and map)

- MAMBA presentation of proposed map, policies, anticipated costs, partnership (5 mins)
- Staff plan for grooming, maintenance, allocating expenses (5 mins)
- Questions/discussion (15 mins)
- Possible decision (5 mins)

7:10 Cummings Street Pump Track proposal (John Hollar, MAMBA)

Background: The Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association (MAMBA) is proposing to construct a bicycle pump track on a city-owned lot on Cummings Street across from the Cummings Street apartments. (See attached proposal for more information)

- MAMBA presentation (5 mins)
- Staff feedback on proposal (5 mins)
- Questions/discussion (15 mins)
- Outline next steps to inform future decision (5 mins)

7:40 Staff Update

- Discussion/Questions on written update provided by staff (5 mins)
- Proposed MOU for working with partners and contractors in city parks (10 mins)

7:55 Budget

- Review and discuss staff proposal

8:15 Adjourn

Unfinished Business

- Hubbard Park vegetation management
- Hubbard road mitigation
- North Branch pump track
- ADA improvements to Hubbard Park
- Budget
- Spring Hollow easement opportunity

Policies in Progress

- Finalize memorial policy
- MOU for groups doing work in city parks (standards/policies)

FISCAL YEAR		FY19 BUDGET	FY19 ACTUAL	FY20 BUDGET	FY21 BUDGET	Difference
PARKS INCOME						
Revenue/Transfers						
1	Grant Revenue	6000	20,355	6000	6000	0
2	VISTA Revenue	6665	7,541	6665	2000	4665
3	Enchanted Forest	3000	4,711	2000	1000	1000
4	Ranger House Rental	7800	7800	7800	7800	0
5	Shelter Reservations	1000	1338	1000	1000	0
	Total Revenue/Transfer	23,465	41,745	23,465	13,400	5,665

PARKS EXPENSES						
Personnel Exp.						
6	Parks Personnel Wages	80070	87,877	99,230	129,230	20,000
7	Comm. Serv. Wages	20000	20,000	20,000	20,000	0
8	Personnel Benefits	52755	48,224	53,945	61,445	7,500
9	Parks Seasonal/Americorps Wages	16000	21,692	16,000	16,000	0
	Total Personnel	168825	177,793	189,175	229,175	27,500
Operating Exp.						
10	Equipment Plan	10000	3,351	21000	21,000	0
11	CIP Plan	9000	1,722	20000	20,000	0
12	Maintenance of Vhcls,Bldngs,Grnds	17,000	12,413	17,000	17,000	0
13	Tools & Operating Supplies	17,090	20,122	16,990	19,990	3,000
14	Non-discretionary Operating	9,250	6,918	6,990	7,795	805
15	Grant & Event Expenses	0	22,772	0	0	0
	Total Operating	62,340	67,298	81,980	85,785	3,805
	TOTAL PARKS BUDGET	231,165	245,091	271,155	314,960	31,305

TREES EXPENSES						
	Tree Personnel Wages	24500		57,841	60,000	2,159
	Tree Personnel Benefits	12540		42,158	42,158	0
	Tree CIP	0		13,000	13,000	0
	Tree Equipment Plan	9600		8,000	8,000	0
	Tree Operating	13565		6,341	6,341	0
	TOTAL TREE EXPENSES	60205		127,340	129,499	2,159

BUDGET NARRATIVE/HIGHLIGHTS

Parks Staffing Increase (lines 6&8)

Last year City Council funded a full time employee starting in January, with the understanding that this position would be funded into a year round position during the next budget year. The Finance Director has entered this as an increase of \$27,500, not including the health insurance raises that are schedule to kick in starting January 1st, and has included it in the “Base Budget” that will represent the starting point for our budget negotiations. A full time year round crew leader would greatly improve our parks maintenance capacity, and would also be the key to freeing up the director to pursue the green print and development of the parks system that we’ve been envisioning. The jobs would be broken down roughly as follows:

- *Parks & Trees Director (80/20 Parks/Trees)*: Budget, Staff Supervision, Planning & Development, Grants, City Council and Management Liasion, Tree Warden, 20-50% Field Time
- *Parks & Trees Supervisor (80/20 Parks/Trees)*: Park Maintenance, Events, Volunteer coordination, Tree Work, 60-80% Field Time.
- *Crew Leader (100% Parks)*: 100% Parks Field Time leading crews and volunteer groups
- *City Arborist (100% Trees)*: 100% Coordinating & Executing our tree program

Enchanted Forest Decrease (line 3)

About 5 years ago the prior finance director put \$3,000 into our budget for Enchanted Forest as a revenue source. Last year we got this decreased to \$2,000. Our position is that this event should be used to raise money for special projects, and not to meet a line in our general fund. I’ve decreased it to \$1,000 to try and incrementally draw it down.

VISTA Decrease (line 2)

When the community services consolidation happened, the 3 departments split up a \$20,000 cost of a VISTA position under the assumption that this position would help us increase our fundraising to the point that we’d be able to cover this \$20,000 and justify the position. This has not been the case for the last 2 years, so this number currently represents a \$6,666 hole that we have to fill with fundraising. MSAC is going to take on \$16,000 of this budget line, leaving \$2,000 to the Rec and Parks each.

Increase in Training Budget (line 13)

As I step into a new role as Parks Director, I would like to take advantage of some professional development opportunities. I’m weighing a few different options, but it looks like the cost of most of the programs that look interesting and worthwhile are \$3,000.

Other Considerations

Benefits of increased staffing

- Maintain and improve ALL of Montpelier’s parks, including traditionally neglected ones such as Blanchard Park, Stonewall Meadows, Mill Pond Park, Summer Street Park, Bike Path/Peace Park/Siboinibi Path, and any future new parks such as the Confluence Park and 5 Home Farm Way.
- Immediately establish a more extended ski trail network, and work towards maintaining an integrated and connected network of ski trails that traverses the city and connects to other trail networks.

- Give our Parks Director the time to pursue the goals outlined in the Greenprint, including accomplishing the goal of having every Montpelier resident be within a 10 minute walk of a high quality park, and creating greenway connections between our parks.
- Increase our capacity to manage job trainees and volunteers, thereby leveraging extra free labor to help maintain our parks and trees.
- Increase our capacity to host events in the park, and encourage more residents to discover and use the amazing resources that we already have.

Tree vs. Park balance.

Having more tree staff to help with tree work has been a great boon to our tree program, and a great drain on our Parks resources. Every tree job takes a minimum of 2, but usually 3 people to complete. This means that Adam should spend 2-3 days/week on tree work, and 2-3 days on Parks work to balance it out. Because of our big back log of tree work this hasn't been the case this year, but hopefully when we get a better handle on our hazard trees we'll be more in balance. Without the Parks Crew Leader position, there could be 2-3 days a week when we have our whole staff doing tree work.

Timing is everything

While it may be true that this is going to be a bad year to ask for "more" within the city budget process, this is an exciting moment in time for Parks & Outdoor Recreation in VT & Nation Wide. There is a lot of momentum behind Outdoor Recreation as a vehicle for economic development, and if we can secure adequate staffing to maintain our parks, I think it will free up the director to accomplish the big visions that we all want.

Proposed Bicycle Pump Track
Cummings Street
October 8, 2019

The Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association (MAMBA) is proposing to construct a bicycle pump track on a city-owned lot on Cummings Street across from the Cummings Street apartments. A pump track is a “circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders ‘pumping’—generating momentum by up and down body movements, instead of pedaling or pushing.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pump_track.

The Montpelier pump track, like most pump tracks, is a bicycle recreational activity primarily for young people, although riders of all age will be welcome to use it. Many similar pump tracks are located throughout Vermont. <https://vtsports.com/pump-vermonts-newest-pump-tracks/>. The Montpelier project will be designed and built by Sinuosity. <http://sinuosity.net/trail-building/pump-tracks-and-bike-parks/>. The project will be funded primarily through private donations and grants.

The proposed lot appears to have been used at some point for fill. It is dry, even in the spring, and is filled with low vegetation (weeds). A portion of it also appears to have been paved. A walk-through of the site was conducted with Vermont District Wetlands Ecologist Shannon Morrison, who did not raise any concerns about the proposal.

The pump track will be built entirely with clean dirt, most of which will be imported to the site. It will be compacted to limit erosion. A 50 feet x 80 foot area will be cleared, although we are requesting a permit for a larger area to allow for potential future expansion. We are also requesting approval for up to ten parking spaces. Gravel may be used for the parking area.

MAMBA has had several discussions about the project with Alec Ellsworth of the Parks Commission, including a brief site visit.

The proposed site is ideal for many reasons:

1. It is located across from Cummings Street, which is home for many low-income youth who can frequently be seen bicycling in the area. It has the potential to be a significant source of recreation for these young residents.
2. It is located in close proximity to the new North Branch mountain biking trails. The parking spaces can be used to support these popular new trails.
3. It is located a short distance from the Elm St. recreation facilities. These facilities can be reached by bicycling a few hundred yards along an existing trail.
4. It can be reached by bicycle from downtown Montpelier.
5. It is flat with limited vegetation. Clearing costs should be minimal.

6. It is located adjacent to an existing nature trail. MAMBA intends to submit a plan to the Commission to upgrade this trail to allow for its use as a kids mountain biking trail.

October 7, 2019

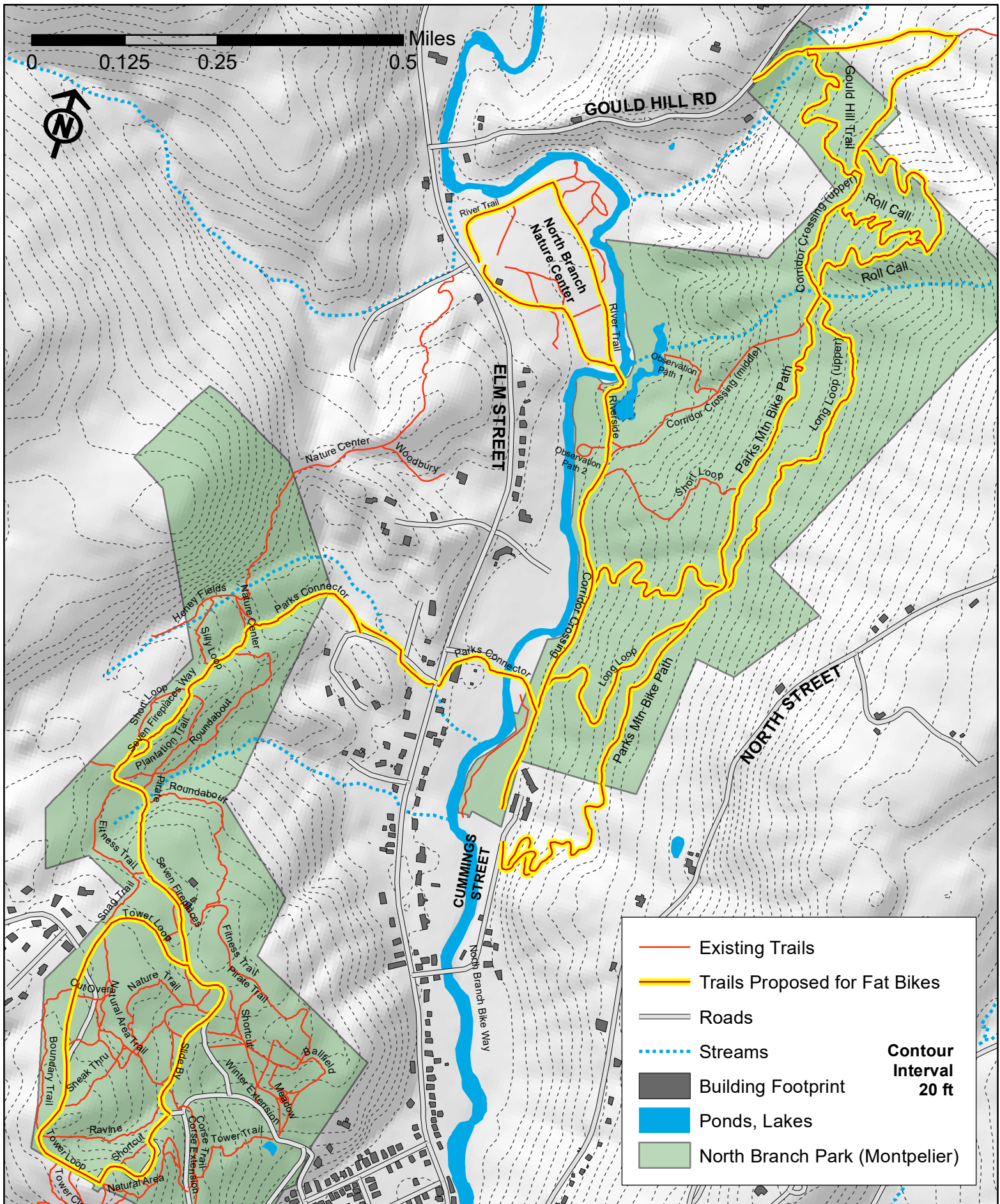
Expanded Winter Biking in Montpelier

Building on the groomed, multi-use trail success during the winter of 2018/2019, this proposal sets forth a plan to add winter biking to the Montpelier park system for the 2019/2020 winter and beyond. Bikers, skiers, snowshoers, and other winter users will continue to be able to share the same trails in what MAMBA believes was a very successful partnership during the pilot 18/19 season.

The Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association (MAMBA) asks for fat bike access December 1st through March 15th, the typical winter months in Vermont where freezing temperatures and durable riding surfaces can be expected, or as conditions dictate. The proposed loops within North Branch Park and Hubbard Park and the adjacent neighborhood-connecting trails will be dependent on trail conditions to be determined by park personnel and MAMBA board members with TrailHUB access. Trail closures, cautions, and general notices will continue to be posted on TrailHUB.org, a website that bikers (and many other trail users) check year-round for local trail conditions. All trails along the proposed route and main kiosks at park entrances will be signed indicating multi-use designation and will indicate that bikers will yield to other winter trail users: skiers, snowshoers, and walkers.

MAMBA took pride in working closely with park personnel during the 18/19 winter season to create a welcoming trail experience for many different snow travelers on the North Branch trails. Many of our members had telling interactions with folks excited about the increased opportunities to experience a backcountry-feeling outing in the safety and familiarity of a frontcountry setting. In working with the Parks Department and MAMBA volunteers, this proposal seeks to increase accessibility to Hubbard and North Branch Parks. (See details on accompanying proposed winter riding map.)

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. It is MAMBA's belief that providing diverse, healthy, inclusive recreational opportunities in our town will enrich this community and benefit all.



Proposed trails for Winter Fat Biking in Montpelier Parks

Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association - Updated October 2019